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VERBAL TMESIS IN GEORGIAN*

Verbal tmesis in Old Georgian (V to XI centuries) and Early Middle Georgian (XII and XIII centuries) is a relatively rare phenomenon. Although most grammars mention it and offer a handful of examples (Deeters (1930:12, §17), Fähnrich (1994:206-207), Shanidze (1976:73, §127), Zorell (1930:89, §18.5; 124-125, §32.1), Zwolanek and Assfalg (1976:67)), tmesis has not, to my knowledge, received much attention in the literature (with the notable exceptions of Chincharauli (1969), Schmidt (1969) and Boeder (1994)). In this paper we hope to make an initial, tentative contribution to understanding verbal tmesis by examining a fairly large number of examples (236 from Old Georgian, and 61 from Early Middle Georgian) and by attempting to answer the following questions:

- What are the meanings and/or grammatical functions of the particles inserted in tmesis (which we shall hereafter refer to as 'tmetic particles'), and in what environments do they occur? When tmesis is not employed (as is often the case in different versions of the same text), what happens instead? (Parts I and II)
- Is tmesis in Georgian governed by Wackernagel's law of clitic placement in Indo-European, as some authors claim? (Part III)
- What does the occurrence of tmetic particles in unexpected positions suggest about Georgian verb structure? (Part IV)
- What are the differences in tmesis as employed in Old Georgian and Early Middle Georgian? What can be said about its diachronic development? (Part V)

Before proceeding to the data and analysis, let us discuss tmesis in general. What is tmesis? Here is a definition from a manual of rhetoric:

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Die unmittelbare Nachbarschaft des alten Platzes mit dem neuen Platz des umzustellenden Bestandteils ist durch eine innere Struktur-
grenze des Ganzen aufgehoben. Für das aus drei Bestandteilen bestehende
und durch engere Zuordnung der Bestandteile *yz* charakterisierte Ganze
x(yz) liegt also in der Umgestaltung *y)x(z)* ein Hyperbaton vor, da trotz der
unmittelbaren Nachbarschaft der platztauschenden Bestandteile *x* und *y*
(wie in der Anastrophe...) zwischen *x* und *y* eine innere Struktur-
grenze des Ganzen liegt. – Wird die innere Struktur eines Bestandteils selbst
durchbrochen (wird also etwa im Mauerwerk ein Ziegel zweigeteilt und in
den entstehenden Zwischenraum ein anderer Bestandteil des Mauerwerks
zwischengeschaltet), so heißt der Vorgang *divisio*... Bereits die Zwischen-
schaltung einer die Einheit sprengenden Struktur-
grenze stellt eine *divisio* dar... Die Sprengung der Einheit durch
Zwischenschaltung materieller Bestandteile heißt man *tmesis*. (Lausberg, Heinrich, *Handbuch der literari-
schen Rhetorik*. Munich: Max Hueber Verlag, 1960, vol. I, p. 253.)

[The direct adjacency of the old place with the new place of the
component [*Bestandteil*] which is to be transposed is broken up by an inner
structure boundary of the whole [*Ganze*]. For the whole *x(yz)*, which consi-
sts of three components and is characterized by the strict ordering of the
components *yz*, there is thus a hyperbaton in the reorganization *y)x(z)*
because, despite the direct adjacency of *y* and the place-exchanging *x* (as in
anastrophe...), there is an inner structure boundary between *x* and *y*. – If
the inner structure of a component is itself broken (as in when a brick in
stonework is split, and in the existing intermediate space another element
of the stonework is interposed [*zwischengeschaltet*]), the phenomenon is
called *divisio*... So interposing a structure boundary, which breaks the unit
[*Einheit*] has already introduced a *divisio*. The breaking of a unit by inter-
posing material components is called *tmesis*.]

The crucial sentence is the last one: “The breaking of a unit
by interposing material components is called *tmesis*.” A classical¹
and somewhat simpler definition is:

*Tmesis est unius compositi aut simplicis verbi sectio, una dictione vel
pluribus interiectis.* | Quae species non facile in scripturis sanctis, quae ex
hebraeo vel graeco sermone translatae sunt, potest inveniri; est autem
huiusmodi:

1. For those who do not have at their disposal the wealth of *tmesis* data provided
in Wackernagel (1892), a few possibly more accessible examples from Greek may
be found in Aristophanes’ *The Clouds*, lines 792 and 1440, and in Euripides’
Hippolytus, lines 342, 594, 878, 934, 1109, 1357 and 1377. See also the discussion
in Euripides, *Hippolytus*, ed. by W.S. Barrett, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1964,
p. 209. I am indebted to Eric Brown for these examples.